

Message Text

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62

ACTION AID-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 SSO-00 DODE-00 NSCE-00 NSC-05

USIE-00 CIAE-00 HEW-06 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-02 PRS-01

RSC-01 SCA-01 SCSE-00 IO-10 PM-03 SS-15 INRE-00 /067 W

----- 033928

O P 252344Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4729

INFO CINCPAC PRIORITY

AMCONSUL BRISBANE

UNCLAS CANBERRA 8277

FOR: AID/PHA/FDRC

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: AEMR, EAID, AS

SUBJ: CYCLONE DISASTER, DARWIN, N.T. AUSTRALIA

REF: FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE HANDBOOK II, 3B, 3-4; II 7B

1. CITY OF DARWIN, POPULATION 40,000, SEVERELY DAMAGED BY CYCLONE
EARLY AM HOURS DEC 25.

2. EARLY ESTIMATES INDICATE OVER 50 DEATHS WITH NUMBER MISSING,
AND 90 PERCENT OF BUILDINGS DESTROYED OR SEVERELY DAMAGED.
20,000 PEOPLE HOMELESS.

3. TOTAL COMMUNICATIONS BREAKDOWN FOR SEVERAL HOURS DELAYED
DETAILED WORD RE EXTENT OF DAMAGE, BUT GOA NATIONAL DISASTER
ORGANIZATION DECLARED DARWIN MAJOR DISASTER AREA, DESCRIBING
CYCLONE AS ONE OF WORST NATIONAL DISASTERS IN AUSTRALIA'S
HISTORY.

4. AUSTRALIAN MILITARY AND EMERGENCY ORGANIZATIONS ON FULL
ALERT. ACTING PRIME MINISTER CAIRNS ARRIVING DARWIN
DEC 26. AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE AND NAVY MOVING IN EMERGENCY
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SUPPLIES AND HAVE STARTED SOME EVACUATION.

5. NATIONAL DISASTER ORGANIZATION CONTACTED EMBASSY DAO EARLY HOURS DEC 26 TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE RPT POSSIBLE REQUEST FOR USAF C-141 AIRCRAFT ASSISTANCE IN MASSIVE EVACUATION, POSSIBLY 10-20 THOUSAND PERSONS. NO REQUEST MADE AT THAT TIME BUT DISASTER OFFICIAL PROMISED TO CONTACT EMBASSY BEFORE NOON DEC 26 TO ADVISE WHETHER ANY OFFICIAL GOA REQUEST WILL BE MADE. EMBASSY HAS BEEN UNABLE THIS MORNING TO CONTACT DISASTER ORGANIZATION. WILL ADVISE DEPARTMENT WHENEVER FURTHER WORD RECEIVED FROM GOA.

6. MEANWHILE DEC 26 PRESS AND RADIO REPORTS DESCRIBE LARGE GOA SHIPMENTS OF RELIEF SUPPLIES AND TEMPORARY HOUSING. THIS SUGGESTS POSSIBILITY GOA DISASTER AUTHORITIES MAY HAVE MODIFIED EVACUATION PLANS IN FAVOR OF ACCOMMODATING DARWIN POPULATION ON SITE.

7. IN ABSENCE ANY GOA REQUEST EMBASSY HAS NO IMMEDIATE NEED TO CONSIDER USE OF AMBASSADOR'S CONTINGENCY FUND DRA, BUT THIS QUESTION MAY ARISE LATER AS RELIEF EFFORTS CLARIFIED.

8. NO WORD ON AMCITS IN DARWIN, AND NO OFFICIAL FACILITIES NOW OPERATIVE TO LOCATE INDIVIDUALS. SUGGEST FOR PRESENT INQUIRIES RELY PRIMARILY ON RED CROSS CHANNELS.

9. EMBASSY WILL ADVISE FURTHER DETAILS.
SIMPSON

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NNN

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